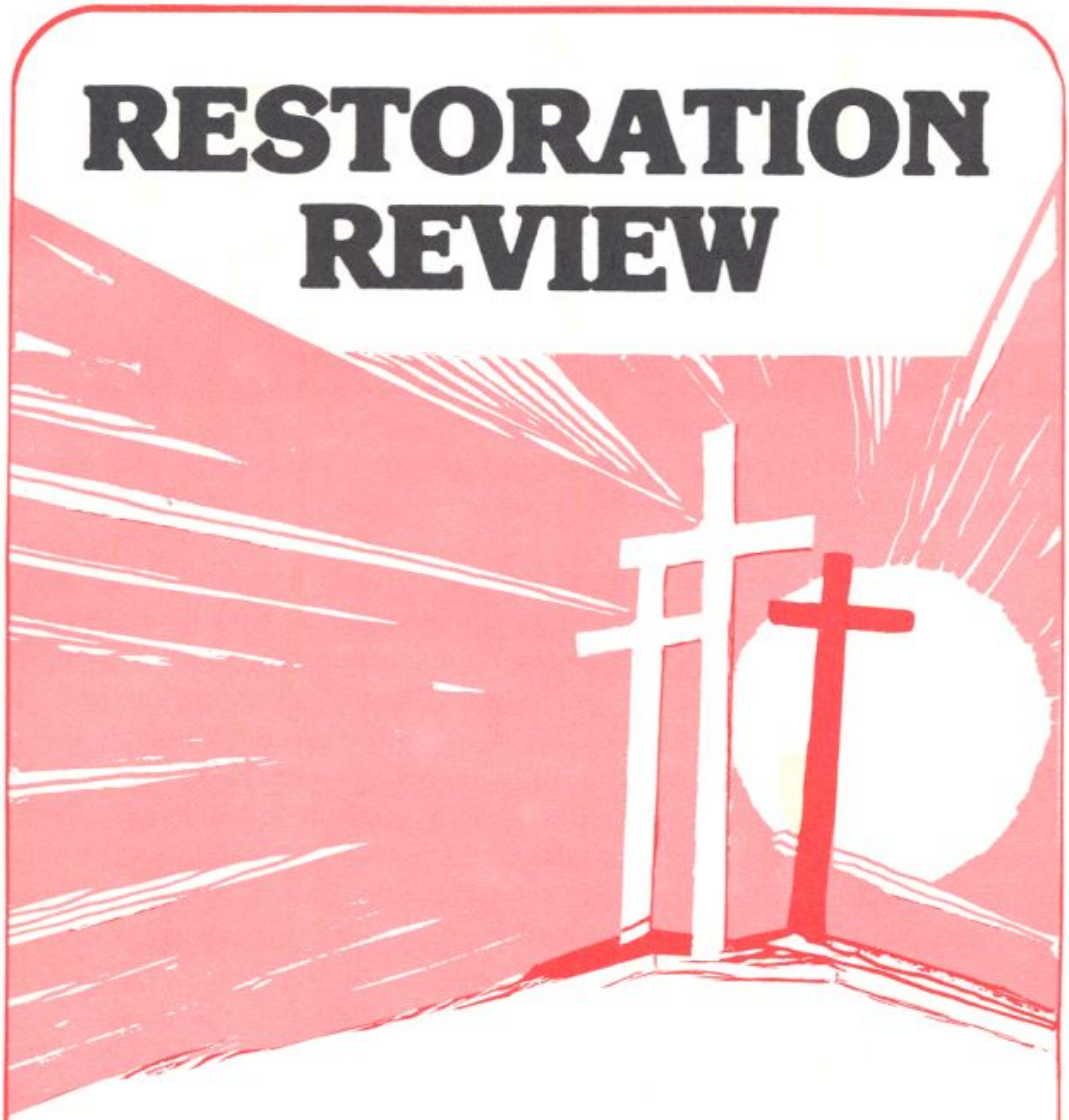
RESTORATION REVIEW



I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day. — *Abraham Lincoln*

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The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View . . .

PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY

It is a rainy day here in Denton, Texas. I sit before my typewriter next to a large sliding door, which makes for a good view of my park-like back yard, which is canopied by two large pecan trees that still have their leaves even if we are well into the fall. The honeysuckle hedge in the distance partly frames the scene, and the stark skeletons of our holly bushes, dead since last year's severe freeze, reminds one that nature is tart as well as sweet. It refreshes the spirit to watch the raindrops fall on my wrap-around driveway and make their way to the carpet of grass, still green, a few feet away.

It is a deceptive scene in a way, for my world is not as peaceful as the scene would suggest. Not only do I watch the squirrels and the crows steal most of our pecans, but the larger world out there seems to be blowing up in my face. The tragic news of Indira Ghandi's assassination and the attending unrest in India fills the air, along with the continuing famine in Ethiopia that may claim millions of lives before it ends. Only days ago terrorists sought to assassinate the prime minister of England in the peaceful city of Brighton. Peace talks in El Salvador are followed by more fighting. All around the world the news is mostly bad. But there is always the good, such as the struggle to be free, as in Poland, even if priests are kidnaped and murdered.

I stopped writing this article long enough to do two things that might make for a bit more joy and peace in our troubled world. I drove to a school out in the county to have lunch with my 9-year old grandson, who may be upset by having suddenly to move to a new school. I sat with him and one of his new friends, a black boy, and assured him that he was going to be all right. I had a good visit with his new teacher, a dedicated soul. Then I sent a Halloween bouquet to Ouida, colorfully arranged in a real pumpkin. I sent this note along with it:

I goofed.
I am sorry.
I love you.

There is a little story behind those words. It is not that I have erred of late more than usual, but that I have often told Ouida that if those three statements were universally accepted and practiced they would work a moral revolution in our world. Those nine

simple words, appropriately spoken, would reduce the divorce rate, mend broken homes and broken hearts, foster friendship, build confidence, dispel suspicion, overcome hate, and work for international peace. They might even reduce the deficit and balance the national budget!

In this my last installment of a Christian world view, I submit them as principles to live by. Yes, as homespun as they may appear they are nonetheless basic ethical principles, rooted in the wisdom of the ages, in moral philosophy, and in the Scriptures. I will express them in more sedate terms.

1. *The principle of self-examination.*

The reason it is rare for a person to admit, unqualifiedly, that he is wrong ("I goofed") is because so few people are willing to examine their own lives. It is much more comfortable to examine others! It is instinctive of man to avoid pain and seek pleasure, and self-criticism is painful. Who wants to admit, even to himself, that he is ignorant, prejudiced, or full of pride? Or that he hates his parents, or that he spends most of his time thinking about himself? Or that he is wrong? This calls for a corollary principle, *the principle of self-improvement.*

One British moralist insisted that "the duty to improve oneself" is *prima facie* in nature, by which he meant it stands as a moral duty without having to be proved. Everyone will admit, even if he doesn't want to practice it, that he should improve himself. Such wisdom is as old as Socrates, who insisted that "The unexamined life is not worth living." One is not ready to admit that he is wrong about anything until he is willing to look deep inside himself, face up to his inadequacies, and resolve to improve himself.

2. *The principle of self-denial.*

One of the great truths of being a real person appears to be a contradiction: *that we win by losing.* We affirm personhood through self-denial. This is what Jesus taught: "He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it" (Mt. 10:39). One is losing, in a way, when he says "I'm sorry," for he is giving in to the other person, but he is really winning. He may lose selfish pride but he gains self-respect.

I am sorry! They are magic words in human relations, always disarming and humbling, so why are they so hard for us to say? The answer is clear and strong: *our selfish pride.* When Jesus calls for self-denial ("If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny

himself, and take up his cross, and follow me") he is dealing with pride. It is hurt pride that is behind many of our problems. There is but one way to deal with this: *renounce the pride.* This is what self-denial means. It is also self-forgetfulness, which expresses itself in our not taking ourselves so seriously. Humility is a virtue, not because one thinks lowly of himself, but because he doesn't think all that much about himself. When this is the case it doesn't matter if someone puts us down. Socrates insisted that the humble man will not pay much attention to *anything* said about him, good or bad!

Kipling was getting at this in those lines from *If"*

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue
Or walk with kings - nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much!

There is virtue in a balance between being "all things to all men," to quote Paul, and being one's own person. Self-integrity and self-denial are complimentary, not contradictory.

3. *The principle of benevolence.*

Religion is a love story, the story of God's philanthropy. He has said to mankind "I love you" all through human history. And this is why we love, as 1 Jn. 4:19 puts it: "We love, because he first loved us." Love is contagious. When we come to see how much God really loves us, *unconditionally* just as we are, warts and all, we are ready to say "I love you" back to God and to others.

There are of course many different ways to say *I love you,* and all those ways may be seen in Paul's remarkable statement in Col. 3:14: "Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." This makes love "the golden chain of all the virtues," as Phillips renders it. Love picks up the broken pieces and puts them back together, or as 1 Cor. 13:7 says it: "Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything," to use Phillips again.

All this points to the power of saying (and doing) *I love you.* Love changes the way we look at life, for if there is anything better than being loved it is to love. So long as a man can love we can believe that he is not wholly depraved. If envy looks through a microscope, love looks through a telescope. Love can so change a person that we can hardly recognize him as the same person.

The little book of *James* can be viewed as a summary of these three principles. The letter calls us to a life of wisdom ("If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God"), which has to do with living effectively in a troubled world like ours. The writer of the letter, who is believed to be the brother of Jesus, lays out principles to live by, and in doing so deals with problems that we all know about: suffering, temptation, deception, anger, the nature of sin, slander, inactive faith, unruly tongue, passions, sickness, apostasy, and more.

Speaking to teachers in particular, James calls for self-scrutiny: "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom" (3:13). One does not prove himself a wise teacher by academic degrees or even by eloquence, but by his good life. I have studied with world famed teachers in our leading universities who have been less than exemplary in the way they lived, such as Paul Tillich, whose wife exposed his infidelities in a book published after his death. Some of our youth have teachers who not only curse in class but who sometimes lecture while still drunk. Even religion teachers do not always manifest "the meekness of wisdom" that the brother of Jesus calls for.

This refers to the humility that only wisdom can inspire — *wisdom,* not merely knowledge. While knowledge may inspire arrogance and rudeness, only wisdom inspires humility and gentleness. Knowledge is man's acquisition, while wisdom is the gift of God. One who has to shout down an opponent might have knowledge, while he who quells a hasty temper by a word fitly spoken has wisdom. James says we prove ourselves wise by right living, by being a gentle person. He says that we are to receive the word with meekness (1:21) and we are to teach it with meekness. We do not prove our worthiness as much by talk as by walk. It is the examined life that is worth living.

Self-denial in James is centered in the control of the tongue, which he describes as "set on fire by hell." He even defines religion in part as bridling the tongue, urging his readers to be "slow to speak." The tongue is described as the source of many of our problems: "The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body." The tongue is like a wild fire within us, a force that runs out of control. He indulges in

hyperbole to show that the tongue is beyond control, claiming that every animal in the sea and on land has been tamed by man, while no one can tame the tongue. He even nails the tongue as "a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

The man who can say "I am sorry" is one in control of his life, one who has said no to the destructive passions within him. James says that the point of control is the "very small rudder," the tongue, which guides the ship "wherever the will of the pilot directs." Great ships driven by strong winds are controlled by that small rudder, James says, and so man can wisely direct his life in this world only by watching what he says. Such a simple and practical rule as being slow to speak is basic religion to James.

Many ills could be avoided if more of us were like one of Shakespeare's characters: "I had a thing to say, but I will fit it with some better time." How often might one think, *If only I hadn't said it! But* when one does say it, if he cannot at last say, *I am sorry,* he is out of control. There is no guiding hand on the rudder.

The oldest of cultures see the moral value of James' religion of the tongue. The Japanese have a proverb that while the tongue is but three inches long it can kill a man six feet tall, while the Chinese have long taught that if one unlucky word falls from the tongue it cannot be retrieved by a coach and six horses. Old Pythagoras saw a wound from the tongue as worse than a wound from a sword, for the latter affects only the body, while the former affects the spirit. Through the centuries the wise have recognized that fortunes are more often made and lost by men's tongues than by their virtues. But James insists that there is neither virtue nor religion when the tongue runs wild: "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain" (1:26).

It is a simple way to summarize the ethics in one's world view, *the bridling of the tongue*. But a principle is involved, the principle of self-control and self-denial. If that great ship that embarks upon the sea of life has no controlling hand on the rudder, there can be no meaningful voyage.

James has his own way of telling us how to say *I love you* or in expressing the principle of benevolence: "If you really fulfill the royal law, according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well" (2:8). He also refers to the love principle as the law of liberty. Love is the royal law in that it reigns above all law and is the purpose and fulfillment of all law. Love is the law of liberty in that love frees one to manifest benevolence towards others as an expression of his own free will and not simply

as duty to a list of unconnected laws. One is free to love in his or her own unique way! And that love rules over all other law! That is what the law of liberty and the royal law mean to us.

But this finds very practical meaning in James. Love expresses itself in acts of mercy, for a faith without such deeds is dead. Love does not make distinctions or show partiality, as between rich and poor. If God chooses the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, as he notes in 2:5, how can we be prejudiced against them? And if Paul refers to love as "It vaunteth not itself," James says even more. Not only does he name the tongue as the little member that boasts great things, but he indicts man for his presumption in trying to direct his own way, as if there is no God in heaven: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain'; whereas you do not know about tomorrow" (4:13). How arrogant it is of us to presume that we call the shots! James lays down a truth that proud man is slow to accept: *you do not know about tomorrow.*

What is your life?, James asks, a question we have to face up to in forging a world view. He does not flatter man in his answer: "You are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." It is only when we see our limitations and our dependence upon our Creator that we can appreciate James' advice: "Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that.'" Then he nails us with: "As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."

This is the "meekness of wisdom" that James emphasizes. We must humbly realize that it is only "If the Lord wills, we shall live" and that it is arrogant for us to pursue a life of "I will do this and I will do that" with little or no thought of God. It points to man's basic sin, *pride,* and it stands against the supreme or royal law, the law of love. When we can say "I love you" in lots of ways both to God and to man we will repudiate our sinful pride and prove our integrity through "the meekness of wisdom. "

The Meekness of Wisdom might have served as the title for this series, for that is the spirit reflected in *The Doe of the Dawn,* the lonely deer on the craggy hill watching the sun rise and seeking his way into an unknown future. On that troubled journey the pilgrim may cry out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," but along the way he finds answers enough that he puts his trust in "the Lord the ruler of nations" and resolves to live for Him, that his children will serve him, and that men will proclaim Him to generations yet unborn (Psa. 22, inspired by an ancient hymn, the Doe of the Dawn). —*the Editor*

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BUILDING A HOUSE OF PRAYER

When you pray enter into your inner room. —Mt. 6:6

We can take comfort in the fact that even our Lord's disciples felt inadequate when it came to prayer, for they asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray." Insofar as we know this was the only thing they ever asked Jesus to teach them. They did not ask him to show them how to preach or to teach or to build churches. *Teach us to pray!*, they asked, as if effective prayer would take care of all the rest. This request resulted in what we call the Lord's prayer, which goes far in revealing to us the nature of prayer. And yet most of us know little about how to pray.

Is prayer to be impromptu, with little thought given to it in advance? What are we to say when we pray? Should there be a set time and place? Is there a technique to prayer, a more effective way to go about it? What are we to expect from prayer?

Among those I have consulted in a search for answers to such questions is a famous British preacher of yesteryear, Leslie Weatherhead, longtime pastor of City Temple in London. In his book, *Prescription for Anxiety* (1956), he recommends prayer as the most effective way to deal with anxiety, and he sees Paul saying the same thing: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). But anxious people have to learn to pray effectively if prayer is to serve as an antidote, and so in a most interesting way he proceeds to show them how to pray, a method he tested in his own life over many years. In this essay I draw upon some of his ideas.

Mr. Weatherhead, citing Jesus' instruction to "Enter into your inner room," conceives of building a house of prayer, one with seven rooms. Since he was talking to poor folk who had only one-room houses, Jesus was not likely suggesting that they literally had an inner room to which they could repair for prayer. Just as when he taught them not to put a lamp under a table but on a stand "so that it will give light to all in the house," he thought in terms of one-room dwellings. So, Weatherhead supposes, when Jesus spoke of praying in one's "inner room" he was referring to an imaginary room, the recesses of one's own heart where God meets one in secret. Taking his cue from Jesus, he builds a seven-room prayer house, and shows one how to pray by leading him through these rooms.

Room 1: *Affirm the presence of God.*

Since one often feels that "there is no one there when I pray," in this first room he should *affirm* the presence of God. Throughout the Bible, whether to Abraham, Moses, or David, God is always saying "I am with you." In this room we hear our Lord saying, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." In this room we repeat some of the great passages where God promises His presence, such as His assurance to Joshua: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you." A few moments in this first room helps us to practice the presence of God in our lives, especially in prayer. It is a satisfying way to begin prayer.

Room 2: *Praise, thank, and adore God.*

Once we have acknowledged His presence, we move on to the next room, which we should see enveloped with sunshine. It is the thanksgiving room where we praise and adore God for His mercy and goodness. We should remember His love, His spend or, His power, His beauty, His holiness. In thanking Him for our blessings, we should be specific by naming our blessings "one by one," some of them at least. In praising God we can recall some of the great psalms: "O Lord, our Lord, how great is thy name in all the earth," or we might make use of classic devotional works, such as Baillie's *A Diary of Private Prayer,* where he says the likes of: "O thou whose eternal presence is hid behind the veil of nature, informs the mind of man, and was made flesh in Jesus Christ our Lord, I thank Thee that He has left me an example that I should follow in His steps." We have much to learn from those who pray soul-lifting and God-exalting prayers, and this comes in part by reading the classics.

Room 3: *Confession and forgiveness of sins.*

We can see this as a darker room, but one that grows brighter as we near the windows. This is the unloading room, for it is here that we lay ourselves bare before the Father, confessing our sins. We must be careful to be specific, naming our sins in their stark and ugly reality. I am impressed with the way William Barclay spells out sins in his *Prayers for the Plain Man,* which Ouida and I often read together. The sins he names are the real ones: selfishness, pride, impatience, ingratitude, insensitivity, being difficult to live and work with, critical in outlook, harsh in judgment, bitterness, resentment. This is the room of the broken heart. We seek and accept God's forgiveness, even as we forgive those who have sinned against us. We now sense the warmth of the sunshine of the windows. God loves us. He is for us. He forgives us.

Room 4: *Affirmation and reception.*

Now that we are made clean by God's forgiving love, we affirm what He has done, with such prayer as: "The peace of God is mine and I am part of His great purposes. The Everlasting Arms are round about me and they will not let me fall." Think of Psalms 23 as inscribed on the walls of this room. To ponder it quietly and confidently will make this an important room, and to remember that God is even more eager to give than we are to receive. We can freely receive, not because we are good, but because God is good.

Room 5: *Purified desire and sincere petition.*

It is in this room that we may learn, as we linger here through the years, to look at our heart's desires from a new perspective, for the things we want (and often pray for) may not be as important as we think. Here we pray that our desires will be His desires for us. We will move from "Give me" to "Make me" and "Use me." Here we pray for stronger faith and more forbearing love. What do we really want, more money, more pleasure, more fame? If we really want Christlikeness, we lay this sincere petition before the Father, and it will be so. A good test for any of our desires is *Can I pray for it?*

Room 6: *Intercession for others.*

This is a room where we can "visit" with both friends and enemies, picturing them in our minds and calling their names in prayer, which may be sufficient. In our mind's eye we can think of a loved one recovering from an illness or emerging from a severe difficulty. We can see those who would abuse us as being more gracious for their own sake. Many effective intercessors keep notes and plan their prayers. Mr. Weatherhead would list four names for each day of the month, amending his list as seemed appropriate, and on any given day he would pray for those four people, once each month. In times of urgency he would of course pray daily for some people. Prayer should be focused, which is hardly the case when we pray, "God, bless all my friends." Rather than pray, "Bless the missionaries in Japan," I can call the countenances of Mark Maxey and Moto Nomuro to mind and lay their names before the Father, seeing their work as fruitful and their faith as abounding. A mother away from home can think of her children as safely tucked into bed, calling their names to God. We don't have to *say* everything that is in our hearts, for God reads our hearts and some things can be better thought than said. When I am away from Ouida I like to think of the angels watching over her as I picture her in bed asleep. That too is intercessory prayer. I sometimes picture our President sitting at his desk *praying* in the face of a weighty decision, which is a prayer I might not be able to put into words. I see my sons dating the right kind of girls and at last proposing to one of them, which is an

appropriate prayer. I can't get them married! Try praying for someone you dislike (or who dislikes you!) that way. Call her name to the Father and then think of good things happening to her.

Room 7: *Meditation.*

Weatherhead suggests that we take an incident in the life of Jesus and think of ourselves as being bodily present, such as an eye witness to his baptism, his temptation in the wilderness, with his disciples on the mount of transfiguration, or even on the cross. In our mind's eye we are there and we can see Jesus in such situations, drawing upon Scripture for the drama. We can call to mind the great promises of Scripture and the great heroes of the faith. We can imagine recent loved ones who have gone on and are now part of "the great cloud of witnesses" that encompass us. We can somehow see them watching our pilgrimage, encouraging us to be faithful as they were. This, too, is prayer.

This seven-room prayer house may be entered in part or in whole daily. We may not visit each room every day, though we will enter them all frequently. The quality of our prayers is more important than the frequency. Substance is more vital than length. One could move through all seven rooms in meaningful and exciting prayer in a matter of minutes, or on any given occasion he might linger in one or two rooms. The important thing is to realize that we cannot really live without God. Even Jesus could not. If Emerson was right that "God enters by a private door into every individual," it is crucial that we make preparation for fellowship with him, such as an imaginative house with many doors open to Him.

The promise is ours that "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sup with him" (Rev. 3:20). In oriental culture that was an unmistakable offer to friendship that never ends. We only need to open the door to enjoy the fellowship that He promises. —*the Editor*

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UNITY IN DIVERSITY

While there may certainly be diversity without unity, there can never be unity without diversity. It is true of all that is beautiful, whether a painting or a symphonic composition, that variety and diversity are so mingled in creative symmetry as to make for something lovely. It is true of all nature, whether a single atom or our entire solar system, that its

diverse elements are so proportioned as to make for unity and orderliness. To achieve unity a bouquet of flowers or the planets in their orbit do not have to bring their diverse elements into conformity or sameness, which would be an absurdity anyway, but only to bring the variety of the various elements into the scheme of their Creator. Plato wanted his students to watch the behavior of the planets, thinking it would build order into their lives. It is the unity in God's diverse cosmos that staggers the imagination and arouses wonder in man's mind.

It would be folly to suppose that the church of God on earth would be anything different. The unity for which Jesus prayed had to be for a unity in diversity, for the background of the apostles ranged from that of a Roman tax collector on the left to a dagger-carrying Zealot on the right. But it was Jesus who made them one in Himself, making them brothers together by the gospel. True evangelism conforms men to the likeness of God through Jesus, while it takes indoctrination to conform them to a sect or party. Conformity to doctrine may be necessary to fellowship among sectarians, but it is conformity to the likeness of Christ that makes men children of God, and surely there is a vast difference between the two. Those who are thus conformed to God by transformation of life enjoy unity in diversity. There can of course be no other kind of unity, man's nature and God's nature being what they are.

The scriptural images of the church make unity in diversity evident enough. The church is both as much one and diverse as a human body: "For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body" (1 Cor. 12:12). It is this diversity in the Body that challenges the church to be one: "But God has combined the various parts of the body, giving special honour to the humbler parts, so that there might be no sense of division in the body, but that all its organs might feel the same concern for one another" (1 Cor. 12:24-25).

Marriage provides another image, with the church as the Bride of Christ, and what serves as a more beautiful picture of unity in diversity than the oneness of a man and his wife. As Phillips' rendition of Eph. 5:32 puts it: "The marriage relationship is doubtless a great mystery, but I am speaking of something deeper still — the marriage of Christ and his Church." In terms of the problems that divide us, this image of oneness may be more practical than we realize, for every married person realizes that it is love and devotion that holds a marriage together, not conformity of viewpoint. The last one of us would have to denounce his marriage and "withdraw" from his partner if the basis of unity was unanimity

in opinion or interpretation. We must conclude that it is love that "binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col. 3:14), and that it is something less than love that has caused all the divisions. Any marriage could end in a day if love did not hold it together.

The marriage symbol is extended to include the family, God's church being His household, with all of us as brothers and sisters together (Eph. 3:14-15). God chooses us to be His sons, the Holy Spirit confirming this by crying "Abba, Father" within us (Gal. 4:6). It is not that we select each other as brothers, like we might choose fraternity buddies. All who are in God's family are brothers, and the Spirit does not have to get an OK from any of the rest of us before He dwells within them as a Guest of heaven. The question of fellowship is just that simple: all in whom the Spirit dwells share in the common life (which is what fellowship means) and they are made one by His presence. If we have no control over in whom the Spirit dwells, then we have no control over who is in the fellowship, however different he may be from ourselves.

Since diversity is within the nature of unity, the Scriptures need not urge us to preserve diversity, but unity. That the Bible bids us to preserve unity through forbearing love is evidence that there will be differences between us, otherwise there would be nothing to forbear. If people are free to think and encouraged to be their unique selves in the Lord, there will be exciting differences between them. But in the true Body of Christ there is the common bond that unites them as one, and that is faith in and loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord, which means they will also be loyal to each other as sisters and brothers.

So diversity may be very diverse (such as we see between the Jewish and Gentile churches in the New Testament) so long as there is unity in Jesus Christ as Lord.

This is not to say that doctrine is not important, for it is important, even crucial to the well-being of the church. But doctrine is teaching and teaching is the function of a school. With the church as the school of Christ, we must recognize the individual differences in the students. They are in different grades; some are slower than others; they have different needs. But they have the common bond of being enrolled together in the same School under Jesus Christ, who is master as well as Lord. That is unity in diversity. —*the Editor*

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THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION

Cecil Hook

Last week Lea and I visited the Space Center in Alamogordo, New Mexico which boasts of a planetarium the likes of which there are only nine others in the world. We viewed with awe the presentation depicting how scientists believe the universe began and how the features of the earth were shaped. The realism of the projections make some viewers airsick. It was an unforgettable highlight of our vacation.

There was a time, however, when such a presentation would have made me sick— not airsick, but soul sick. It would have been shocking and unsettling to me and I would have rejected it in its entirety. The program, called “Genesis”, spoke of creation and ended with Neil Armstrong’s dramatic reading of Genesis 1:11 as he viewed the distant earth rising over the horizon of the moon, but it did not limit the time of creation to six twenty-four hour days six thousand years ago.

By instruction, posters, and art work our children are impressed from their earliest Bible class experiences with the contention that God made the universe in six literal days about four thousand years B.C. I am convinced that our well-meaning teachers do our children a disservice by such teaching. It is good that they instill belief in the children that God created the universe, but it is regrettable that in the same process they put a scientific stumbling block in the path of their faith.

Our literal interpretation of the creation account collides with scientific interpretations. We have made it an either/or proposition; if we accept one interpretation, we must reject the other. So, often faith is shaken in those who accept scientific conclusions. Instead of holding our views of both science and the Bible as interpretations to be studied for harmony, we have accepted our Biblical interpretations as ultimate truth which must displace any scientific interpretation which varies from it.

More needs to be said about our claimed literal interpretation of Genesis. We are not so literal except in the points that we are hung up on. Is a snake subtle, having a reasoning intellect like a man? If it could reason, could it talk without a voice box? Could Adam and Eve eat knowledge? Did they have knowledge of good and evil before eating the forbidden fruit? Was Adam endowed with unlearned speech, language, information, and experience? Was he given tools and knowledge to dress the garden? Were Adam and Eve given a culture at the time of their creation? Were they given vessels, cutlery, scissors to cut their hair, and a nail file? If they were given this culture and knowledge, how can we account for the loss of this practical knowledge like the use of tools by aboriginals later in history?

Can man hear God walking? Does a snake eat dust? Did the tree of life die? What became of the Garden of Eden? Adam's need for food indicates that his body would consume and expend energy. Would he have died before the fall without food?

When we face these and other similar questions, our literal approach to Genesis begins to evaporate, leaving us high and dry.

I do not claim to have all the simplistic explanations, but that is not alarming because my salvation in no way depends upon understanding of scientific data. The Genesis account is intended to create faith and awe in us toward an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Creator and God rather than giving us soul-saving scientific facts.

"Each has an interpretation" and is usually eager to impose it. Mine differs from others which I have read concerning the creation account. If you will indulge me, I will state it briefly for what challenge it may offer you. Surely, you do not have to accept it.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Every atom of every element brought into existence from nothing is included in that first sentence of the Bible. That was the creation—period! All the creative acts described in the six day periods were but the arranging of these material elements and endowing with life from the Original Life. It is similar to the housewife who creates/makes a cake. She makes a new arrangement of existing materials. When this elemental creation took place and how long the process took is not revealed. It was in the beginning of creation, not in the beginning of existence, for the existing Spirit had no beginning. Whether God took a moment or billions of years is neither revealed nor relevant.

Now that the universe is created, the reader's attention is directed to changes taking place on the earth. It is still molten hot so that it is waste, void, and shapeless with all of its moisture in steam and vapor shrouding the surface in darkness and with turbulent winds caused by the heat.

In the cooling process the clouds thinned so that light could filter through. Let there be light on the earth. Light was not created then, for the universe had millions of suns, but it penetrated to the earth's surface. Continued cooling and further thinning of the atmosphere allowed for distinction between day and night due to its rotation. More cooling allowed the moisture to form clouds with sky between them and the earth. The condensed moisture gathered on the cooled surface of the earth and, because of the upheavals of the earth's crust, separated from the land to form seas. By natural process it would require more than

a day for the water to drain off the continents. By all this process God has now made the earth ready for life and habitation. God could have done this in a few hours, but he could have let natural processes work for millions of years to bring it all about. He is still its creator.

On the third day God brought forth vegetation producing seed and fruit after its kind. And it was so! These were truly fast producing plants if they brought forth seed and fruit after their kind in twenty-four hours. Literal interpretations overlook this point, but reproduction was demonstrated on what is called the third day.

Whether God put the earth in orbit around the sun on the fourth day or actually formed the sun and moon then is not of importance. It seems more likely that He set them in the heaven for signs then in the same sense that He set the rainbow for a sign in Genesis 9:13. He called a special attention to the rainbow rather than altering the way that light is refracted. So He gave special meaning to the sun and moon.

On the fifth day the fish and fowl were created and charged to multiply after their kind and swarm, which they did. The length of time and process of forming them is not the emphasis. Again, the reproductive process bringing swarms of marine life would require more than a literal day.

The same can be said about the reproduction of cattle and beasts on the fifth day.

Whatever the length of the sixth day was, it gave time for God to pass all the animals and fowls in review before Adam that he might name them. This was before Eve was made for him (Gen. 2:18-22). Could Adam possibly have named each of the thousands of species of animals and fowl in twenty-four hours?

The creation account in Genesis actually follows the same general pattern set forth in scientific theory. Science tries to define the natural process but the Bible does not describe the process. Literal interpretation claims instantaneous creation allowing for no process of development. Truly, God could have created and formed the universe and all that is in it in ten seconds. Or he could have taken ten billion years. If God let natural laws which he ordained work in the process of developing and forming the universe, does that detract from his power?

Since God was establishing a natural order, it seems only reasonable that he would have let it operate from the beginning. For example, the light from M 33, the nearest star group outside our Galaxy, could have been made to reach earth instantly, or natural law could have allowed 850,000 years for it to reach us. What purpose could have been served by suspending the natural law concerning the speed of light in this instance?

One of our problems has been in trying to define a method that God used when the Bible does not give us that information. The next problem has been in making that interpretation a matter of faith. Our inconsistency is evident in disclaiming any accommodative language or literary style in the Genesis account while we attempt a literal interpretation only of the areas on which we have become hung up.

You may contend that my explanations are weak and destructive to faith. I believe that such an approach will make faith easier by avoiding unnecessary scientific obstructions to faith. It has been a strengthening approach for Lea and me and our children, and I am convinced that the same can be true with you and your children. *—1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX 78130*

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ON BEING SWEET AND REASONABLE

Let your sweet reasonableness be apparent to everyone —Philip. 4:5

On the Lord's day following Thanksgiving at our church here in Denton we had a sharing session in which various ones said a word about what they were thankful for. I told them of my continual search for ideas, of how I search out ideas as one might search for gold. *I am thankful for ideas!*, I said, and inasmuch as Philip. 4:5 had been read earlier, I told them of an exciting idea I had come upon in reference to that verse, which is usually translated "Let your forbearance (or gentleness) be known to all men."

Since the Greek term appears only twice in the NT there is some disagreement as to what it means. The KJV renders it: "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Phillips' rendition is helpful: "Have a reputation for gentleness." Luther translated it with the German word Lindigkeit, which the dictionaries define as *mildness* or *gentleness,* but they say it is particularly beautiful in German.

I explained to our assembly that Matthew Arnold came up with the great idea of that passage when he rendered it *sweet reasonableness.* S. T. Bloomfield, one of my favorites among the old commentators, claims that in this passage the apostle calls for that "reasonableness of mind that holds complete control over the passions," and yet it is a reasonableness touched by sweetness and gentleness. So that is the idea: *Let your sweet reasonableness be apparent to everyone.* And what a great idea that is, a gold nugget if ever there was one! Bloomfield also sees in the admonition "an equanimity or holy indifference to the things of this world" which is reflected in a gentle, kind way of life. That is almost too much to take in. How exciting. It shows how a single line from Scripture can blow one's mind and change one's life.

R. C. H. Lenski, who has a way in his commentaries of saying about all that can be said about a passage, notes that this Greek term denotes a *yielding* disposition toward others, and so he renders it: "Your yieldingness, let it get to be known to all men!" Paul is referring to more than an inner quality, Lenski insists, but to the way others are to be treated. We are to yield to others in a sweet and reasonable way.

Some people are sweet but dumb, dumb in the sense that they just won't think even when they can. Others are the very epitomy of reason, even bursting with logic, but are mean and insensitive. Many others come up very short on both counts in that they are neither sweet nor reasonable. To be both sweet and reasonable is to approach the divine, and surely we cannot attain such excellence without the presence of God in our lives.

We do so many irrational things, even those of us who should know better, such as arguing on and on with our implacable friends. Jonathan Swift was wise in advising us that "It is useless to attempt to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into." Most people's beliefs are rooted in tradition, emotion, prejudice, or habit rather than in reason. We must first motivate people to *think* before they will do any serious questioning about their way of life. This is where the yieldingness and the sweetness comes in. We must love them rather than argue with them, which may express itself in authentic listening. Sweetness of spirit is listening with yieldingness.

There is a dear old man here in Denton, a brother of the non-Sunday School persuasion, who loves to argue. He reminds me of the old Scotsman, who said to his pastor when he visited at his bedside, "Oh, no, let's not pray, let's argue!" Realizing that it is past time to argue with my aged brother, I play dominoes with him. That may be sweeter than it is reasonable, but at least it isn't unreasonable. I now and again make specific

commitments to God. On a given morning, for instance, I may commit myself to be more diligent that day and to get more done. One of my commitments is never again to argue with anyone about anything. Reason, yes, but not argue.

It is also unreasonable to complain and fuss and whine as if the east wind were in our voice. Samuel Johnson was right that the usual result of complaint is that it excites more contempt than pity. The one who is pleased with finding fault is usually displeased with finding virtue. But the strongest case against "the whining yelp of complaint," as Robert Burns put it, is that it is neither sweet nor reasonable. It does not qualify for the yieldingness to which the Scriptures call us.

Few things are meaner and more unreasonable than negative, destructive criticism, *carping* being the word for it, if not *slander.* While we might cautiously indulge in honest criticism of others, we should be eager to accept criticism of ourselves, even if it is not always constructive. If others are not sweet and reasonable in their evaluation of our efforts, we must nevertheless manifest that spirit in our judgment of others— if indeed we have to judge at all.

The plea for reasonableness is an affirmation that the mind matters. When Jas. 1:19 says "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" it is telling us to *think*, that the mind matters. The Bible calls us to "the renewal of the mind" (Rom. 12:2), which at least means that we are to rise above nonsense. And it is nonsense that pervades many of the "issues" that cause "wars and fightings among you," to quote James again.

There is the proposition "the authority of the silence of the Scriptures" that is laid on us for everything from plurality of communion cups and Sunday school to instrumental music and societies. In the name of reason, how can there be authority in silence, whatever be the system of law or jurisprudence? How can one break a law on which the law is silent? In all the history of hermeneutics there is no such principle of interpretation as "the authority of silence." The nonsense of the argument becomes clear to anyone who trys to be consistent, for the Scriptures are "silent" in things that one practices as well as in things that he does not. When an anti-instrument brother laid it on one who uses the organ with "Where is instrumental music mentioned in the New Testament?," his reply was, "In the same place that it mentions the Sunday school." If instrumental music is wrong — or anything else— reason would demand that the wrong be based on more than the silence of Scripture, if indeed it is silent on the subject, a proposition that can be questioned. If the Bible is silent on any subject, no conclusion can be drawn except that the Bible is silent on that subject.

Then there is talk about the heresy of "unity in diversity" and even "the unity-grace heresy," which is something like referring to a "water is wet myth." In all our various fellowships (a euphemism for *sects*!) we have diversity. Any two people are diverse in numerous ways, including their interpretations of the Bible. To speak of unity *not* being diverse is to be unreasonable since there can be no other kind, and how can any meaningful plea for unity and grace be heretical?

But Philip. 4:5 is not talking about cold-blooded logic that has no heart. Reason is to be immersed in love and forbearance, and it is to be yielding. Sweet reasonableness! It is surely one of the great liberating truths of the Bible. It is liberating because one comes to see that he does not have to have his way even when he knows he's right. Nor does he have to be frightened of being wrong so long as his is an honest search. It is the secure person that can yield.

Sweet reasonableness should start at home. What is sweeter than to listen with quiet love, and what more reasonable? And to yield. "Yieldingness, let it be evident to all!" is the divine imperative that will change our lives and homes. And our churches? The day we take sweet reasonableness to church with us, and sprinkle it along the way as we go, is the day that real unity will begin. —*the Editor*

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BOOK NOTES

Those interested in devotional material suitable for family reading should consider three titles we have imported from Scotland. *The Plain Man's Book of Prayers* and *More Prayers for the Plain Man,* both by William Barclay are 4.50 each, and *A Diary of Private Prayer* by John Baillie is 5.50. Ouida and I have used these for years, over and over, and share them with many friends. The prices are postpaid and the supply limited. And we do strongly recommend such devotional material, for they teach you how to pray.

We are pleased with the bound volumes of this journal that are still available, for they are beautifully bound with colorful dust jackets, and, we believe, have articles of lasting interest. Ideal for your library or for a gift. *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977) and *The Ancient Order* (1978) are 5.95 each, while *Blessed Are the Peacemakers/With All the Mind* (1979-80) and *Jesus Today* (1981-82) are 9.00 each. These are matching volumes, as

will be our new bound volume for 1983-84, entitled *The Doe of the Dawn,* which should be ready early next year and which you should order in advance.

The massive (800 pages) biography of William Barclay is more than a chronicle of an important man's life and work. It is an intellectual saga of a sensitive pastor and scholar caught up in a world of change. I am presently *studying* it, not just reading it. The price of 29.95 is not too high, but because of pre-pub purchase we can pass it on to you at 24.95, postpaid. If you are a student of Barclay's works, this book is a must.

The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell by Richardson is still in print, but it may again go out of print. 21.95 postpaid.

Exciting reading about the conversions of great souls in the church is *Conversions,* edited by Hugh T. Kerr of Princeton. Seventeen stories are told, from Paul, Augustine and Constantine to Wesley, Spurgeon and C. S. Lewis. It is history as well as biography— rich material for storytellers and illustrations for sermons. 5.50 postpaid.

What can you and your church do for world hunger? The revised edition of *Bread for the World* by Arthur Simon tells you, along with a lot of information on the subject. He deals with the cause of hunger and the politics involved. 6.50 postpaid.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

The program has been set for the conference at the Central Church of Christ, 1710 W. Airport Frwy., Irving, TX 75062, for freer, changing churches, Jan. 17-19, 1985. Subjects to be discussed include changes churches face from our cultural pluralism, the ministry of women, are we preaching good news?, problems related to polity, nature of worship, how to deal with our sectarianism and exclusivism, how we relate to our heritage. Also reports from changing churches. Speakers include Ivory James, Nancy Meyers, Larry James, Nan Dean, Bob Douglas, Ken Roger, Bobbie Lee Holley, Ervin Waters, Joe Jones, Jim Bevis, Paul McGee, Lynn Mitchell, Roxie and Harold Thomas, Phil Elkins, and Jim Reynolds. The format will be panels and group discussions. It begins at 2 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 17, and ends at noon, Saturday, Jan. 19. It is open to all members of Churches of Christ, but special invitations go to those who are known to be caught up in the winds of change. Those who attend will really be participants in that they will be part of well-planned study groups that will be digging for answers. For information on housing, etc., or a printed

program, call the church at 214-259-2631. I personally see this as *the* conference for our people of the 80's.

The Phil Donahue Show on TV provided some bad press for the Church of Christ when it aired "the Collinsville trial" controversy one day last month. Marian Guinn, the one who sued the elders for exposing her as an adulteress, was present with her volatile lawyer, along with a dozen or more representatives from the Church of Christ, who were led by Garland Elkins. Phil had his usual sizable audience participating in the give-and-take, most of whom were hostile and resentful to the church for the way it handled the Guinn case. The audience also appeared turned off by Garland Elkins, who defended the church's position, mostly by effusive quotations from Scripture, some of which were hardly relevant and few of which seemed appropriate to the occasion. We do not clarify complex issues simply by quoting Scripture, and, as someone in the audience implied, those who quote the Bible the most are often the ones who understand it the least. However that might be, the Church of Christ on the Donahue Show came across as a narrow, self-righteous, bigoted sect that is out of touch with reality and, when challenged for badgering truant members (Who spys on the elders?, asked the audience), knows only to quote the Bible. Phil really took our "image" to the woodshed! As I watched the spectacle I imagined how different it would have been if someone like J. Harold Thomas or Jim Carter (referred to above) had been our spokesman. In that case all parties, including Marian Guinn and the church elders, would have been treated with loving forbearance and the audience would have seen (what is really the case) that even if we, like other churches, sometimes err in our zeal we are for the most part a reasonable and responsible people. Compassion and sweet reasonableness would have been our image, even amidst unfortunate publicity. In subsequent segments of the show both Pat Robinson and Jerry Falwell manifested the spirit I am referring to, which proved disarming to a potentially hostile audience.

I f you are of the persuasion that older folk don't change, then you should read this prayer from Stewart Hanson, Sr., 88, of Long Beach, Ca.: "Holy Father, I would that all men were not almost, but altogether such as I am today, except for these haunting memories of when for a half century I zealously contended that I was not a member of a denomination and with the same misguided zeal asserted that Jesus the great shepherd of the flock had no sheep which were not of our fold worthy of our brotherly love and Christian fellowship. Only a loving and benevolent Heavenly Father could forgive such blind ignorance."

With the next issue we begin our 32nd year of publication and our new theme will be *Adventures of the Early Church*, which will run for two years, the Lord willing. We hope you will not only stay with us, but introduce us to others. The cost is nominal in that you can send the paper to others for only 3.00 per name in clubs of four or more, which can include your own renewal. Single subs are 5.00, one year; 8.00, two years.

The issues for 1983-84 will soon be available in a bound volume, under the title *The Doe of the Dawn*, which will match previous volumes. This will have a table of contents and an introduction, with colorful dust jacket. If you have placed your order, we will send you the book when it is ready with invoice enclosed.

Since many have taken advantage of our offer of a free copy of *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett, which the rank and file sometimes refer to as "a history that I can understand and enjoy," when you send us seven subs at 3.00 each (total 24.(0), we are extending the offer into 1985.

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Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201*

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